

INDONESIAN DEMOCRACY BEYOND 2024: Coalitional Presidentialism, Presidentialization, and Imperial Presidency

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ABSTRACT

During the presidency of Joko Widodo (2014 - 2024), particularly in his second term, Indonesia's multiparty presidential democracy has witnessed the rise of an "Imperial Presidency." Coined for the first time by American historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in his 1973 book of the same name, this term refers to a president becoming disproportionately powerful and dominant in politics and policymaking. Unlike the US, an imperial president in Indonesia does not face significant opposition from political parties or from the legislature. The existing scholarship has not sufficiently explained why an executive seeks to become dominant even when it does not face a hostile legislature. To understand how Indonesia's imperial presidency arises, whether it will continue under Jokowi's successor, and its potential impact on democracy, this article employs three key concepts from comparative politics: coalitional presidentialism, presidential majoritarianism, and the presidentialization of politics. Using the qualitative approach and secondary data analysis, this article argues that without significant opposition from the political parties (legislature), the judiciary, and the public, Indonesia's imperial presidency is likely to continue and will further erode Indonesian democracy.

Keywords: imperial presidency; coalitional presidentialism; presidential majoritarianism; presidentialization; social movement.

INTRODUCTION

Like many other democracies worldwide, contemporary Indonesian democracy is characterized by backsliding or decline (Bermeo, 2016; Diamond, 2015; Power & Warburton, 2020; Warburton & Aspinall, 2019). For example, V-Dem data indicate that Indonesia's Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) has experienced a continued decline since 2013. For 32 years, during Soeharto's authoritarian regime, Indonesia's EDI was between 0.19 and 0.23. The political reform in 1999 made Indonesia a democratic country, with the EDI increasing from 0.2 in 1997 to 0.69 in 1999. For a decade, Indonesia's EDI was between 0.69 to 0.71. Since then, Indonesian EDI has fluctuated, decreasing 0.2 points, from 0.71 in 2008 to 0.69 in 2009. After 2009, the EDI increased again by 0.1, reaching 0.70 in 2010, and remained constant until 2012. Since 2013, the EDI has continued to decline, reaching a low of 0.54 in 2023. Using the concept of two stages of democratic resilience (Boese-Schlosser et al., 2021), Indonesia has been experiencing autocratization since 2013.

Contemporary democratic backsliding can take one of at least three varieties (Bermeo, 2016). The first is a promissory coup, in which an elected government is ousted under the promise that it is to defend democracy, and that elections and democracy will be held and restored as soon as possible. The second is executive aggrandizement, where the

checks of executive power, including those from the opposition, are weakened by an elected executive. The third is the strategic manipulation of elections to favor the incumbent, which often occurs along with executive aggrandizement. The second and third varieties are in line with the findings of V-Dem (Boese et al., 2020) that global democracy is under threat from "... democratically elected leaders engaging in the erosion of media freedom, civil society, and the rule of law" (p. 2).

Democratic backsliding in Indonesia takes the form of executive aggrandizement, which is often accompanied by strategic election manipulations. Under Jokowi's presidency (2014-2024), particularly in the second term (2019-2024), Indonesia witnessed the rise of an "Imperial Presidency." This term refers to a president becoming more powerful and dominant in politics and policymaking. The term was used for the first time by American historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in his 1973 book (*The Imperial Presidency*), which studied the increasing dominance of the US President in the 1960s and 1970s vis-à-vis other political and policy-making actors (the legislature or Congress), particularly in foreign policy. The presidencies of George W. Bush and, later, Donald J. Trump have made this work even more influential.

In the American context, the imperial presidency is characterized by the increasing use of unilateral actions by the president, such as executive orders (Busch, 2017; Christensen & Kriner, 2020; Koenig, 1981; Savage, 2007; Schlesinger, 1973). The increasing use of unilateral actions is related to the president's effort to secure policy victories, on the one hand, and to face a hostile legislature on the other. In the words of Christensen and Kriner: "... many of the most prominent unilateral actions of recent years clearly illustrate how presidents can secure policy victories unilaterally when they are blocked legislatively" (2020: p. 16). Similarly, Koenig (1981) stated that "whether a given president becomes 'imperial' depends mainly on his situation, his times, and the events of his tenure" (p. 40). The imperial president attempts to expand the power of the presidency while circumventing potential opposition from political parties and the legislature (Christensen & Kriner, 2020), thereby advancing his agendas or policies. In other words, in the American context, the imperial presidency is a way out or a solution that a president views as a means of facing strong opposition from Congress, particularly from the opposition parties (Democrats or Republicans).

In the Indonesian context, the concept of an imperial presidency can also be used to describe the president's efforts to exert dominance over other actors in politics and policymaking, particularly against the political parties in the legislature. However, in the Indonesian context, this effort is not because the president faces the potential immobilization or deadlock in pursuing his agenda. This is because the Indonesian legislature has never been as hostile to the executive as the American legislature. Indonesian presidents, especially after the shift to a pure multiparty presidential system in 2004, have consistently been able to assemble governing coalitions strong enough to support their governmental agendas and stabilize the system (Hanan, 2012, 2014; Mietzner, 2023). Indonesian presidents do not need to rely on unilateral actions when facing the legislature.

The conventional view is that multiparty presidential systems are inherently prone to instability (Linz, 1990, 1994), leading scholars to identify multipartyism and presidentialism as a "difficult combination" (Mainwaring, 1993; Stepan & Skach, 1993). This conventional view argues that the "difficult combination" is inherent in multiparty presidentialism due to the lack of incentive for the president to form a governing coalition, as the president is independent of the legislature. The president can establish his own cabinet because he is a single formateur and does not need to involve the parties in the legislature when forming a government. When a president's party in the parliament has minority support (usually much lower than 50% of the parliamentary seats), the president will govern as a minority president (Chaisty et al., 2018). Since 2004, the Indonesian presidents have been minority presidents, with the president's party always commanding far less than 30% of the seats in parliament. Comparatively, the phenomenon of a minority president in Indonesia aligns with the rise of minority presidents in other contemporary multiparty presidential systems (Chaisty et al., 2018).

Minority presidentialism, according to Chaisty et al. (2018), is characterized by a directly elected president with limited parliamentary party support (often holding fewer than 20% of parliamentary seats) and a fragmented party system. These two interconnecting phenomena contribute to the system's instability. However, the literature and research on presidential systems around the world have reached a general conclusion that this possible instability or immobilism is mitigated through a new approach called coalitional presidentialism (Cheibub & Limongi, 2007, 2010; Chaisty et al., 2014, 2018). Minority presidents around the world have demonstrated their willingness and capabilities to form coalitions during their terms, thereby governing with stability (Cheibub et al., 2004; Shugart & Carey, 1992).

Coalitional presidentialism accurately describes the Indonesian multiparty presidential system. Since 2004, the coalition has been the governing mode of both Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), the first directly elected president, and Joko Widodo (Jokowi), the second directly elected president. Both presidents have governed for two terms. With coalitional presidentialism, the president's agendas have been implemented quite well, and the stability of the system has been maintained, avoiding the potential deadlocks or immobilism predicted under the conventional view. For example, the national budget bills from the executive branch (the president) have always been approved, usually unanimously, by the legislature, providing favorable political conditions for the government to function effectively. This stability, according to Mietzner (2023), is comparatively unique because the coalition, as its source, encompasses not only parties in the legislature but also various actors, including civil society groups, the military, and the police.

There were few signs of an imperial presidency until Jokowi's second term in office (2019-2024). For example, there was meaningful opposition, particularly from PDIP and Gerindra until 2014, and from Gerindra, PKS, and PD during the presidential term of 2014-2019. During Jokowi's second term, however, he assembled a supersized coalition with

political parties (more than 80% of parliamentary seats). His cabinet included not only representatives from his political party but also various groups from different segments of society. The president was also able to maintain high approval ratings among the public. The president stood at the center of power and could act metaphorically, like a king or emperor, but nobody seemed to be able to oppose him.

These trends create deep concerns about the quality and, more importantly, about the survival of Indonesian democracy itself. During this era of the imperial presidency, the executive, in advancing his agenda, whether political, economic, or other, can bypass or violate existing laws and procedures or ethics without facing opposition by the political parties in the legislature. This concern is inconsistent with the positive relationship between coalitional presidentialism and the state of democracy.

The existing scholarship has not sufficiently explained why an executive seeks to become dominant even when it does not face a hostile legislature. In their analyses of democratic decline in Indonesia, Power and Warburton (2020) and Warburton and Aspinall (2019) highlight, for example, the president's unwillingness to pursue more substantive reforms. Meanwhile, Hanan (2012, 2014) and Mietzner (2023) note the executive's ability to rely on an oversized or very large coalition, which creates a dominant governing platform for the president. Building on existing scholarship, this article aims to connect the increasingly dominant executive to the phenomenon of presidentialization—driven by both the personalization of politics and the nature of multiparty presidentialism practiced in Indonesia since 2004.

With Indonesia now entering a new government following the 2024 general election, several questions arise. Will the imperial presidency continue under the Prabowo Subianto administration? How should we assess the impact of the imperial presidency on Indonesian democracy? These questions are especially relevant given Prabowo's pledge to continue Jokowi's government programs and the significant role the former president played in helping secure his victory.

To address these questions, this article begins by discussing several factors that contributed to the emergence of Indonesia's imperial presidency. It then identifies possible continuities and discontinuities between the Jokowi and Prabowo administrations. The article concludes by outlining several scenarios for the next presidency and the future trajectory of democracy in the country.

Coalition, Presidentialization, Imperial Presidency, and Democracy

Theories of coalitional presidentialism have generally repudiated the concerns of the potential failure of democracy under multiparty presidentialism (Linz 1990, 1994; Mainwaring, 1993). Linz identified three characteristics of the presidential systems that threatened democratic stability: dual legitimacy, rigidity, and the tendency toward majoritarianism. Dual legitimacy occurs because both the president and legislature are directly elected. Therefore, both the president and the legislature can claim legitimacy, and if

the two branches conflict, the possibility of having a deadlock or immobility is high. Rigidity stems from the fact that the president and legislature have fixed terms. The president cannot be dismissed in the middle of the term except under extreme circumstances, and the impeachment process is usually complicated and difficult. Thus, when there is high dissatisfaction or disillusionment with a president, there is no way out other than waiting for the president's term to end. Lastly, majoritarianism creates a tendency for the president to ignore the legislature, particularly when the president believes that his agenda is blocked by the parliament. In a two-party presidential system like the USA, this usually occurs when there is a divided government where a president is from one major party while the opposition party controls the legislature.

Mainwaring maintains that the main problem with presidentialism is the difficult combination of multipartyism and presidentialism. Elections in multiparty systems often yield no legislative majority. A president who wins in a presidential election is, therefore, supported by a minority party. Because the president in the presidential system is independent of the legislature, when forming a cabinet, they do not need to create a coalition with other political parties. As a single formateur, the president can form their cabinet. However, when governing, the president needs to cooperate with the legislature to approve governmental agendas, because the legislature can block the president's agenda if the president does not seek majority support from the legislature. In other words, presidentialism makes the president independent from the legislature or political parties, but multipartyism requires the president to form a coalition when governing. The conflict between these two institutional features makes governing difficult and the system fragile.

Coalitional presidentialism theories respond to the perils of presidentialism as well as the problem of "difficult combination." The majoritarian tendencies of presidentialism mean that the president can ignore the legislature, use the power they have (constitutionally and politically), to circumvent all potential opposition. An imperial presidency along the US model describes this method of governing. Alternatively, under coalitional presidentialism, a president can share their power with parties of coalition members regarding cabinet positions and other coalitional goods. It is also possible that a president uses both approaches, i.e., on the one hand, they form a coalition, but on the other hand, they try to circumvent all potential opposition.

Linz and Mainwaring's theories can be regarded as negative views on multiparty presidentialism. Coalitional presidentialism views multiparty presidentialism from a positive perspective (Chaisty et al., 2014, 2018; Cheibub & Limongi, 2010; Elgie, 2005; Power, 2010). This approach contends that building and managing a coalition is the main task of a minority president in multiparty presidentialism (Pareira et al., 2023). To do so, the president or the executive is equipped with various coalition formation and maintenance tools called the executive toolbox, which can be used to make the system work (Chaisty et al., 2014, 2018; Raile et al., 2011).

The presidential or executive toolbox consists of at least five instruments (Chaisty et al., 2018). The first is agenda-setting power, such as the president's constitutional power in proposing and deliberating bills to the legislature. The second is cabinet power, for the president has the authority to fire and hire cabinet members at will. The third is partisan power, i.e., the size or strength of support the president can get from their floor coalition in the legislature. With a broad coalition, a president can get enough partisan power to advance presidential agendas. The fourth is budgetary power. In a presidential system, the power to propose a national budget is usually in the hands of the president, allowing them to control the allocation of national resources in running the government. Finally, the president can use various informal institutions to bring the parties into their coalition or to run specific policies. Prominent examples of these instruments are corruption and clientelist networks.

Using these various tools, the president's coalition can consist of both the floor coalition and portfolio coalitions (Chaisty et al., 2018). The floor coalition is the political party in the legislature that becomes the presidential governing coalition. The portfolio coalition is a reflection of political parties' membership in the cabinet. Presidents can also enlarge their governing coalition to include not only parties but also other segments of society (Mietzner, 2023). This can include various societal representations such as influential civil society or religious organizations, minority and women's groups, and geographical representation. I term this the public coalition. A president's coalition can be vast and eclectic, combining floor, portfolio, and public coalition-building strategies.

The central role of the executive and the separation of powers between the president and the legislature result in the presidentialization of politics. This may consist of personalization of politics and the presidentialization of parties (Elgie & Pasarelli, 2018; Ufen, 2006, 2017; Hlousek, 2015; Poguntke & Webb, 2007; Samuel & Shugart, 2010). Poguntke and Webb (2007, p. 7) describe "...the three faces of presidentialization, each of which revolves around the tension between political parties and individual leaders". In the first place there is personalization of politics, which becomes focused on a central figure. Political parties may be established merely as vehicles for their leaders to run for office. Poguntke and Webb (2007, p. 5) write, "The de facto presidentialization of politics can be understood as the development of increasing leadership power resources and autonomy within the party and the political executive respectively...". The personalization of politics is conducive to an imperial presidency as the president can not only weaken the opposition, but also even prevent the emergence of any possible opposition. In their account, Poguntke and Webb emphasize: "To the extent that the growth of executive power and the effects of electoral presidentialization have elevated the president to a paramount political figure, he or she will begin to govern increasingly past the parties in the legislature" (2007, p.10).

The second form of presidentialization is presidentialized parties (Ufen, 2017; Samuel & Shugart, 2010). Because of the separation of powers, a governing party has two representatives: the president in the executive branch and members of the legislature. As the legislature has to check and balance the executive, the goals and the interests of the two

representatives (the president versus their party in the legislature) can be different or even conflictual. A party becomes presidentialized when the president takes a more dominant position against the party. In the separation of power system or presidential system, the party of the president tends to be presidentialized (Samuel & Shugart, 2010). Presidentialized parties weaken the checks and balances functions of the president's party, also increasing the president's dominance over the legislature.

The third form of presidentialization is the presidentialization of power (Potguntke & Webb, 2007), where power is increasingly centralized in the president's hands. Linz's view of presidentialism sees majoritarianism as a solution when a president faces significant opposition or a hostile legislature. One of the tools the president can use in this regard is the "going public" strategy, where the president puts pressure on the legislature or the opposition by claiming public legitimacy (Kernell, 2007; Pika & Maltese, 2010; Thurber, 2009). Majoritarianism becomes a tool for a president to accumulate and centralize power in their hands, further supporting the emergence of an imperial presidency.

Theoretically, coalitional presidentialism can be a remedy to the potential immobility of multi-party presidentialism as a coalition can stabilize the system and facilitate effective lawmaking and governing. However, when coalitional presidentialism is coupled with the three forms of presidentialization described above, the implications are negative. A president committed to democracy will restrain himself from expanding his power beyond constitutional limits, even without significant opposition, but one uncommitted to democracy may pursue strategies that lead to an imperial presidency.

What factors can strengthen democracy under an imperial presidency? There are at least two possibilities. One is the constraints on the executive (Boese-Schlosser et al., 2021) from the legislative and judicial branches of government. Empirical evidence shows that more effective constraints on the executive can be functioned by the judicial than the legislative body (Boese-Schlosser et al., 2021). The public can also constrain an imperial president by rallying or mobilizing itself against actions that endanger democracy. However, as Christensen and Kriner (2020) have noted, this constraint is only effective if it is connected to the response of other political actors. The public can only be an effective constraint if other institutional actors oppose the imperial president's actions.

The other possible way to support democracy under an imperial presidency is public opposition in the form of protests or social movements involving civil society groups and activists. Their success depends on the structure of political opportunities (Kurzman, 1996; McAdam, 1982; Schock, 1999, 2005), not only on their internal strength as theorized by resource mobilization approaches (Jenkins & Perrow, 1973; McAdam et al., 1996). Political opportunities external to social movements influence the movement's mobilization, trajectories, and outcomes. Schock (1999) identified at least four elements of political opportunity, i.e., repression (usually subtle until the apparent intervention of state authorities), influential allies, elite division, and press and information flow. Since blatant repression is challenging in a democracy, and press and information flow are also relatively accessible, the

political opportunities of the movements in a multiparty presidential democracy are influenced by the existence of influential allies and elite divisions. The source of influential allies is usually the opposition, and they may be important political actors inside or connected to the government. Influential allies can also provide support to the movement when facing an elite division on the issues that concern the movement. The challenge, of course, is finding significant, influential allies in a situation with a dominant executive and insignificant opposition in the parliament or legislature.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article is using using qualitative approach and utilizing secondary data from public resources namely Indonesian election data, political parties and legislative data. The article also utilizes data from national surveys conducted by Asia Barometer (AB), Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI), Indikator Politik Indonesia (Indikator), and Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC). The data is analyzed by using the concepts of imperial presidency, coalitional presidentialism, presidentialization of politics, and presidential majoritarianism.

As this article analyzes political events and information across two presidential periods in Indonesia, it relies primarily on publicly recorded sources covering major political developments during those years. Major mainstream media outlets, such as *Tempo* magazine, are considered reliable because they have consistently documented and reported key political events and information throughout both periods.

The use of publicly available data on elections, political parties, and legislatures from the Indonesian Election Commission (KPU) is also appropriate, as these data are credible and easily accessible. In addition, survey data produced by reputable polling institutions—such as Indonesia Barometer (AB), Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI), Indikator, and SMRC—provide valuable longitudinal information on presidential approval ratings, public commitment to democracy, and public evaluations of democratic performance. These datasets help illustrate changes in these variables over time.

The author processed the available datasets from these survey institutions using SPSS and Excel applications.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Coalitional Presidentialism and Imperial Presidency: Indonesian Style

Indonesia has been a multiparty presidential democracy since the introduction of direct presidential elections in 2004. Through four consecutive presidential elections every five years, two presidents have governed for two terms each. In 2024, Indonesia held the fifth presidential election, resulting in the third directly elected president, Prabowo Subianto.

The first president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), was an extremely minority president as his party, the Democratic Party (PD), controlled only about seven per cent of the legislative seats. In his second term, SBY was re-elected with a landslide victory in the first

round of the election, but PD was still a minority party with only 25% of legislative seats. Jokowi, the second president, was also a minority president, as his political party, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP - Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle), held 19% of legislative seats under both his terms.

Hanan (2012, 2014) and Mietzner (2023) have argued that SBY and Jokowi were not only coalitional but also accommodative presidents. In the first term, SBY assembled a large coalition gradually by including parties that were not part of his presidential election coalition, such as Golkar. SBY's coalitions were broad and encompassed political parties and representations of various groups in the society. The size of his floor coalition was 63.3% (seven parties) in the first term and 75.5% (six parties) in the second term. The share of political parties (floor coalition) was less in the portfolio (cabinet) coalitions, where political parties in the floor coalition only held about 50% of the portfolio coalitions. Another 50% was held by non-party affiliates such as professionals or technocrats and representatives of various groups like women, youth, specific geographical areas, and others.

Similarly, Jokowi's coalitions were broad and encompassing political parties as well as various society groups. Jokowi's floor coalition size was 67.7% in the first term. In the second term, this size increased to 82% initially and later became 92%, approaching the presidential election of 2024. Like SBY, the share of parties in Jokowi's floor coalitions was much smaller in the portfolio coalitions, as many cabinet positions were awarded to non-party affiliates.

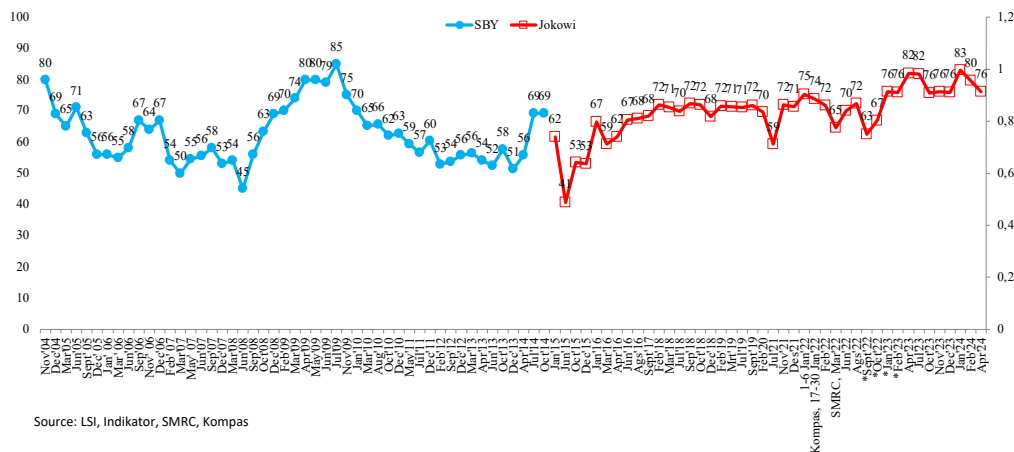
Given their size and diverse origins, we can categorize SBY and Jokowi's coalitions as oversized coalition as well as eclectic. A coalition is oversized when its size is much larger than the minimum winning coalition, which is 50% of seats in a legislature (Riker, 1962). Jokowi's second-term floor coalition was even more staggering because it reached almost 100%, leaving almost no parties out of the cabinet. Their coalitions are eclectic because they include influential society groups as well as parties. Any party and society group can join the portfolio coalition as long as the president asks them.

During the last two decades of the Indonesian multiparty presidential system, this type of coalition has reflected the dominance of the president. For example, the stark difference between the size of the floor coalition and the share of the floor coalition parties in the portfolio coalition reflects presidential dominance. Political parties are willing to be included, knowing that they will get only half of the total positions in the cabinet. The mantra for this among political parties is that the appointment of cabinet members is the president's prerogative. Second, the president can allocate around half of the portfolio without being opposed or challenged by parties. These are signs of personalization or executive dominance in the politics of presidential cabinets.

By having non-party affiliates in the portfolio coalition, SBY and Jokowi ward off opposition from the influential mass public or other social forces who are not represented by political parties. Coupled with high public approval ratings, this further increases presidential dominance. As depicted in Figure 1, the public approval rating of SBY was generally high

in the first term, while it tended to be low in the second term. SBY's low approval rating in the second term is similar to that of other second-term presidents in presidential systems. Interestingly, Jokowi has stable and high approval ratings during the first term and even higher approval ratings in the second term.

Figure 1. Presidential Approval Ratings (2004 – 2024)



Source: LSI, Indikator, SMRC, Kompas

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The three forms of presidentialization also occurred under both presidencies. The personalization of politics can be seen in the very dominant roles of political party central figures. All parliamentary parties, except the cadre-based Justice and Prosperous Party (PKS - Partai Keadilan Sejahtera), are dependent on their chairpersons or central figures such as Megawati of PDIP, Prabowo of Gerindra, SBY of PD, and others. This allows the president to win the loyalty of all political parties while only dealing with a small number of party elites.

Party presidentialization also occurred under both presidencies. However, under Jokowi, this type of presidentialization happened in a nuanced and particular way. Jokowi was not the central figure of his party (PDI-P), allowing for conflicting interests between the president and his party and that his party was ironically among the least presidentialized parties in Indonesia. Presidents' majoritarian tendencies were also clearly visible under both SBY and Jokowi, as shown by their willingness to forge the largest coalitions possible.

Thus, coalitional presidentialism during SBY's terms was characterized by oversized coalitions, eclectic coalitions, and all three forms of presidentialization. With presidential majoritarian tendencies, a robust oversized coalition, and a presidentialized party, SBY's presidency paved the way for an imperial presidency.

The imperial presidency did not materialize under SBY, however, for three reasons. First, there was meaningful opposition from the public and political parties. Although SBY's approval rating reached as high as 85%, it also dipped as low as 50% at several points. This means public support toward SBY was unstable, making his public legitimacy as a dominant executive varied and situational. SBY's floor opposition was also sizeable, 30% in his first term and 25% in his second. Third, SBY was unwilling to prolong his presidency by seeking

more than two terms or trying to maneuver for his sons to replace him beyond the constitutional limits or the existing regulations. Among political parties, this provided certainty that they could prepare for the president's replacement after his two terms ended.

During Jokowi's first term, there was only one difference with SBY's presidency: his own less presidentialized party. Thus, Jokowi still faced meaningful opposition during the first term. Within his political party, Jokowi had to be more accommodating, and public opposition was substantial. For example, after lifting the fuel subsidy at the end of 2014, his approval rating plummeted to less than 50% in the middle of 2015. As depicted in Figure 1, his approval ratings later were relatively stable, at 60 - 70% on average until the end of the first term, a slightly modest rating compared to the first term of SBY. The floor and the political parties' opposition were also quite significant. Three political parties, Gerindra, PD, and PKS, were outside the coalition, with the strength of more than 30% of the parliamentary seats. As a result, Jokowi's first-term coalitional presidentialism and majoritarian tendency faced significant opposition, which interrupted the slide towards a more imperial presidency.

In Jokowi's second term, as his coalition became even larger and more eclectic, meaningful opposition against Jokowi became almost absent. The only opposition came from his own less presidentialized party, PDIP. However, PDIP only took an openly conflictual approach against Jokowi once it was evident in 2021 that his agenda (which included seeking a third term or extending his second term) differed from PDIP's. PDIP also faced difficulties in opposing the president, as Jokowi had become savvier in exercising his tools of executive domination and could rely more on other coalition members to sideline PDIP. With high public approval ratings, political parties were also having difficulties challenging Jokowi. In 2022 and 2023, for instance, Jokowi's approval ratings reached 82 - 85%. These were the conditions under which Indonesia's imperial presidency emerged under Jokowi's second term.

Perpetuating Imperial Presidency

Prabowo Subianto will test the limits of Indonesian democracy. Immediately after being declared as the presidential elect, Prabowo stated his willingness and plan to include as many parties as possible in his coalition (Kompas, April 2024). He has now formed an oversized floor coalition of at least five out of eight parties in the national parliament. From his presidential election coalition, consisting of four main parties (Gerindra, Golkar, PAN, and PD), Prabowo has 48.6% of the parliamentary seats. He has been trying to include all parties, including PDIP, Nasdem, and PKS, his opponents during the presidential election. So far, PDIP and Nasdem have yet to take a clear stand as part of a coalition or part of the opposition. In other words, until Prabowo's cabinet's announcement after his inauguration on October 20, Prabowo's governing coalition had not faced clear opposition. His coalition so far consists of six parties, with more than 72% of legislative seats. This could become supersized if PDIP is included, leaving only Nasdem and PKS outside the coalition. It is even possible that all parties could join the floor coalition, making the government like a single,

extensive party regime. Like Jokowi, Prabowo's portfolio coalition is significant and even larger. Until Jokowi's second term, the size of the cabinet was limited by the law to 34 portfolios at most. However, the law was changed by the parties supporting Prabowo in the legislature, removing the provision on the maximum size of the cabinet. As a result, Prabowo's cabinet also encompasses various social and demographic groups outside the representation of parties in the floor coalition.

Given Prabowo's strategy of continuing to establish oversized and eclectic coalitions, the size of the floor opposition and public opposition is small. The existence of the opposition will depend on the political parties' willingness to oppose the governing partisan alliance. As in other multiparty presidential democracies, Indonesia's elites and the political parties see less incentive to be outside the government (Carey, 1997). The main reason is that having direct access to power inside the government coalition will serve party and elite interests. Among the eight parties that will have seats in the national parliament, four have never been outside a government coalition (Golkar, PKB, PAN, and Nasdem). Only PDIP, Gerindra, PKS, and PD have experience in both government coalitions and opposition. Two of them (Gerindra and PD) are Prabowo's presidential election coalition partners. So, the decision to make the next presidential democracy have meaningful opposition or not is in the hands of PDIP and PKS.

Another reason for the low expectation of meaningful opposition is the question of whether Prabowo will be president for one or two terms. Prabowo started his presidency at the age of 73 and faces chronic health issues. With the possibility of a one-term presidency, the incentive for any party to be in the opposition is even smaller. Political parties will be willing to be in both floor and portfolio coalitions because it will provide better opportunities to prepare for the next presidential election. Even if Prabowo can secure a second term in office, parties will calculate that Prabowo's second term will be even weaker due to these health issues and because he has no children who can contest the subsequent presidency. So even if Prabowo is a two-term president, there are weak incentives to be in the opposition.

The oversized or supersized coalition is also eclectic, bringing the public from various sectors into the portfolio coalition. As of now, we are still determining what the president's approval rating will look like. Most likely, however, Prabowo will be supported by the public, as was his predecessor.

Second, it is also clear that Prabowo displays majoritarian tendencies. The message he has been sending to the public and political elites is that he wants to include everybody in the government. He also seems to hate being opposed. In May 2024, for instance, Prabowo stated that if a party or anyone was unwilling to cooperate with him, that party must not disturb the government. This statement was widely cited and broadcast on most mainstream media, both electronic and social media. Prabowo possibly has also learned from Jokowi that standing at the apex of power, particularly above political parties, helps to advance any president's agenda.

Third, the personalization of politics will likely continue under Prabowo as well. No political parties of the next parliament indicate any plan to move away from their current central figures. With nearly all political parties entering the coalition, these central party figure roles will make it easier for the president to strike any deal to advance his political, economic, and governance agendas.

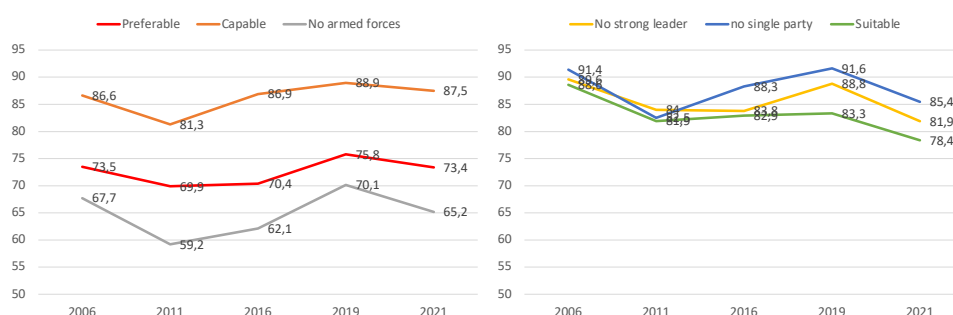
Fourth, far more so than Jokowi, Prabowo's party will be presidentialized, along the lines of SBY's relationship to PD. Prabowo is the central figure of Gerindra, and his party is unlikely to challenge the president. Other political parties inside the coalition could check Prabowo's authority, but with good coalition management and by satisfying the demands of coalitional goods distribution, the president can overcome interparty disputes inside the coalition. This tendency of parties to be dependent very much on the state and state resources has been confirmed in many countries (Mair, 1994).

In summary, an imperial presidency is likely during the Prabowo administration because of the continuation of oversized eclectic coalitions, the continuation of presidentialization in terms of personalized politics, the increasing dominance of the president/executive, a presidentialized party of the president, and the absence of meaningful opposition on the floor of the legislature and among the public. The imperial presidency is one of the results of executive aggrandizement in a multiparty presidential democracy, and according to Bermeo (2016), presents a serious risk of the continued deterioration of Indonesian democracy.

Hope Remains in the Hands of Civil Society, Rejuvenating Democracy

At least based on public opinion research since 2004, Indonesians' public commitment to democracy is still high, and the public's evaluation of how democracy is practiced is quite critical. This means that when it comes to the survival of Indonesian democracy, the public may be the source of democratic legitimacy and resilience.

Figure 2. Public Commitment to Democratic Principles



Preferable: Which of the following statements comes closest to your own opinion? Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of ...
 Capable: Which of the following statements comes closer to your own view? Democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society
 No armed forces: Strongly or somewhat disagree that the army (military) should come in to govern the country.
 No Strong leader: Strongly or somewhat disagree that we should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things.
 No single party: Strongly or somewhat disagree that Only one political party should be allowed to stand for election and hold office.
 Suitable: where would you place our country today? 1 = Completely unsuitable, 10 = completely suitable: 6-10 points

Source: Asia Barometer Surveys of Wave I – VI

Figure 3. Public Satisfaction with Democratic Practice

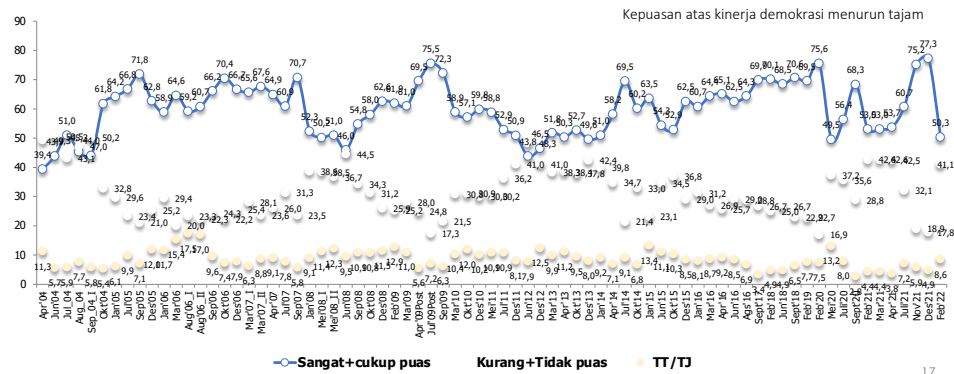


Figure 2 shows that Indonesians' commitment to or preference for democracy is still high. Indonesian scores are high on the six indicators of democratic preference. All are above 70%, and some reach 80% or more. Meanwhile, the evaluation of how democracy is practiced, as shown in Figure 3, indicates that the Indonesian public is rational and critical. The level of satisfaction rises and falls depending on the issues of the day (usually related to the state of the Indonesian economy) and based on how the government runs the country.

Social movements did exist during Jokowi's presidency in the form of public rallies and protests as part of civil society's check against the president's or government's policies, particularly in the second term. According to the political opportunity structure theory, however, to be meaningful, the protests of Indonesian civil society and the public in general will need influential allies. As noted above, these allies usually come from the powerful elites and formal decision-makers in the legislature, judicial, and executive branches. Allies may come from parties outside the government, both those in the legislature and those without a seat in parliament. Allies might also come from social groups that are represented in Prabowo's portfolio coalition. So, instead of being co-opted by the president, influential civil society groups like NU and Muhammadiyah or youth organizations can become the allies of public social movements in making democracy survive. Finally, the public can use judicial review mechanisms against undemocratic laws made by the president and his coalition, finding allies via the constitutional court (MK).

Social movement groups should be alert to the possible further deterioration of democracy or even the autocratization of the regime under Prabowo. There are at least two reasons for this. First, a dominant president can push the political regime to the brink of autocratization. The public was unaware of this possibility, particularly during Jokowi's first term, because they assumed that Jokowi was a committed democrat. Second, unlike Jokowi

in 2014, Prabowo has been known to the public for quite a long time. His commitment to democracy is ambiguous at best. In his inauguration speech as the president on October 20th, 2024, he made vague statements about democracy, such as that Indonesia needs to develop its democracy based on Indonesian culture. He seems to imply that Indonesian democracy does not need opposition, as reflected in his effort to include all political parties in his floor coalition. These two factors should alert democratic actors to the possible further deterioration of democracy.

The following social movements or public protests provide clear examples that the Indonesian mass public and Indonesian civil society groups need influential allies to prevent further deterioration of Indonesian democracy. In 2019, just a few weeks before Jokowi's second term, the legislature proposed a revision of the law on the Corruption Eradication Commission. Jokowi was critical to the passing of the law. The revision weakened Indonesia's anti-corruption measures and, therefore, was widely rejected by the public, including civil society activists. Student demonstrations and rallies against the revision proposal were held in many parts of the country, particularly on the campuses/universities. The public opinion survey conducted by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) in early October 2019 found that the majority of the public opposed the revision. However, the law was passed because public opposition was not supported by the movement's significant, influential legislative and executive allies. The most potentially influential ally at the time was Mohammad Mahfud, MD, who was soon the coordinating minister of politics, law, and security. He could not persuade Jokowi to reject the revision of the anti-corruption law.

Another example was public opposition to the so-called omnibus law. This omnibus law, or the law on job creation, was the president's proposal to encourage investment in Indonesia. The law was viewed as harmful to workers and beneficial to big business. Widespread demonstrations occurred in many parts of the country, particularly cities, and involved workers, students, and social activists. However, the law was then quickly passed because the public had no allies within the Jokowi administration.

One of the most controversial political issues toward the end of Jokowi's second term was a proposal to amend the constitution to provide a way for Jokowi's third term or the extension of his second term until at least 2027. The effort was systematic, and advanced by Jokowi's own cabinet team and by political parties such as Golkar. The public and activists alike rejected the idea. In its national public opinion survey at the end of February and early March of 2022, LSI found that around 70% of the public rejected the proposal. This opposition came not only from the public in general but also from those allied with the president, including 59% of Jokowi's supporters and 87% of Prabowo's supporters in the 2019 presidential election. Among those who were satisfied with Jokowi, a substantial majority, between 65 - 70%, also rejected the proposal. In the end, this proposal failed. One of the reasons was public opposition, but the public's allies also supported public social movements, including those led by the country's political parties. Jokowi's political party, PDIP, rejected the proposal, and there was a clear opposition from parties like Gerindra.

The last example shows how the judiciary, especially the constitutional court, can be a democratic ally. Toward the end of August, when the process for candidacies for local elections of 2024 began, the MK ruled that the threshold for the candidacy for local executive offices should be lowered. This provision of the law that MK changed had been seen as undemocratic because it can be used by political parties, particularly the government coalition, to prevent potential candidates they do not like from entering the competition. The president's coalition was against the ruling and planned to challenge it. This created widespread public outcry across the country. Several political parties, especially PDIP, supported the protests, and in the end, the effort of the president's coalition to reverse the MK ruling also failed.

These examples show that public opposition is still effective, but only in partnership with influential allies and in the form of social movements. In other words, preventing further deterioration of democracy in the next multiparty presidential democracy in Indonesia will also depend on whether there are influential allies within the country's political system. This will constrain the imperial president, preventing or at least slowing the further decline of Indonesian democracy.

CONCLUSION

This article has combined the three essential elements of the working of multiparty presidentialism: coalitional presidentialism, presidential majoritarianism, and the presidentialization of politics. It concludes that multiparty presidential democracy in Indonesia has led to the rise of the very dominant executive or the imperial presidency. The analysis of those three elements suggests that the imperial presidency will continue under Prabowo Subianto. This also implies a risk of further deterioration of democracy or autocratization. However, there is still hope that civil society and the public in general will be more alert and prepared to face this trend. The challenge is finding influential allies who can fight alongside the mass public and civil society to defend Indonesian democracy.

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